



## Explain Accreditation to Your Students

Students consider many factors when selecting a college or university, and while some students may be undecided on a specific career path, it's important that advisors explain how accreditation may affect their future decisions and opportunities.

Explain that there are two kinds of accreditation: institutional accreditation, and specialized or professional accreditation.

Institutional accreditation means the college or university as a whole meets broad overall organizational quality standards.

Specialized or professional accreditation (also known as programmatic accreditation) means an academic program at the college or university is approved by the accrediting body that enforces educational standards for that particular professional field.



## Prepare Your Students with Role Play

Practice with students so they know not only what questions to ask school administrators, but what answers they should be listening for, to determine if a program is accredited for the career they seek:

- Is your program accredited? If so, by which agency or organization? (Make sure the college specifies whether it has institutional or programmatic accreditation, or both.)
- If your program is not accredited, will I be able to work in this or any other state after I graduate?
- Is there a required exam or certification to work in this field? If so, does graduating from your program mean I can take this exam or be eligible for certification?
- How important is accreditation to the employers in this field?
- Does this program's accreditation make me eligible for federal student aid?"



## Help Your Students Understand Terminology

Accreditation can be complex, but it's even harder to understand when you're unfamiliar with the jargon.

Phrases such as "eligibility to sit for the registration exam" or "completion of an accredited program as required by state licensure law" can be confusing and intimidating!

Explain concepts in simple terms, and make sure students know that different states may have different requirements for any given profession.

**accreditation matters**

**[aspa-usa.org](http://aspa-usa.org)**



**Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors**

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## Why is accreditation important?

Accreditors verify that an academic program offers a quality education.

Accreditation standards are the program criteria that colleges and universities across the country must meet. It's important to find out if a program is accredited before you decide to go there.

The official approval of accreditation awarded to schools and programs that meet established educational standards ensures you are prepared for your career.

Even if your degree is from an accredited *college or university* ("institutional accreditation"), many fields and professions— from nursing to engineering— often require that your degree be from an accredited *program* ("specialized" or "professional" accreditation").



## How do you know if a program is accredited?

Most accreditors' websites will list the college and university programs that are accredited.

Even so, it's always a good idea to ask the college:

- Is your program accredited? If so, by which agency or organization? (Make sure the college specifies whether it has institutional or programmatic accreditation, or both.)
- If your program is not accredited, will I be able to work in this or any other state after I graduate?
- Is there a required exam or certification to practice in this field? If so, does graduating from your program mean I can take this exam or be eligible for certification?
- How important is accreditation to the employers in this field?
- Does this program's accreditation make me eligible for federal student aid?

## Can accreditation affect your career?

Absolutely.

Visit [aspa-usa.org/our-members](http://aspa-usa.org/our-members) for a list of professions and fields that have specialized accreditation.

There you will also find links to each accreditor (the organization or agency that ensures university and college programs are meeting the educational standards in that field).

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Watch the video *What Should I Know about Specialized and Professional Accreditation?*

[aspa-usa.org](http://aspa-usa.org)

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